
Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority
Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2026 – 2029



Introduction

The Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority (DBIDA) Strategic Plan 2026-2029 is the product of an inclusive planning process by volunteer DBIDA members, supported and facilitated by staff from the City of Dover Office of Business Development. The intended scope of this plan covers City Fiscal Years 2026-2029, or from July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2029.

What is DBIDA?

DBIDA was originally established as the Dover Industrial Development Authority in 1972 pursuant to the provisions of [RSA 162-G](#) and has operated continuously, including under the dba name “Dover Economic Development Corporation” since that time. Chapter 162-G grants authority to municipalities to undertake economic development activities that support one or more of the following public purposes:

- Development and preservation of business and industry
- Alleviate and prevent unemployment
- Ensure growth and prosperity and promote general welfare
- Authorize municipalities to act directly or indirectly to foster and encourage development
- Establish this public purpose and define related actions as an essential governmental function
- The statute explicitly discourages municipalities from seeking relocation of businesses or facilities that are already located in another New Hampshire municipality

In order to achieve this purpose, RSA 162-G grants the following powers to municipalities for economic development:

- Buy, sell, or rent business and industrial facilities
- Engage in projects
- Lease or sublease facilities to tenants
- Issue bonds and use facilities as collateral
- Accept grants and enter into contracts to achieve other purposes

From 2004-2020 a series of amendments to the [City Charter](#) and DBIDA’s [Operating Rules](#) changed the organization’s name to the Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority and established it as a City board with the following purpose:

DBIDA shall provide the leadership and coordination necessary to foster and encourage business and commercial development within the City of Dover, in order to improve the quality of life within, and fiscal health of, the City of Dover.

Like other City boards, DBIDA pursues this purpose under the general supervision of the City Council and with support from City staff from the Office of Business Development. DBIDA’s actions should be generally consistent with the latest edition of the City Council Goals (currently the [2024-2025](#) edition) and the City’s [Master Plan](#).

Goals and Objectives

DBIDA held a strategic planning retreat on December 3, 2024 to identify potential goals and objectives to be pursued over the life of this strategic plan. Results of a pre-retreat board survey and a report detailing that discussion will be attached to this document as appendices. Through this process DBIDA identified three goals, each with multiple underlying objectives, which have been refined as follows:

Goal 1: Eliminate barriers to starting, operating, and expanding a business in Dover.

Objective 1.A: Identify City policies or processes that act as barriers and propose or advocate for more business-friendly alternatives.

Objective 1.B: Pursue or inform strategic partnerships to remove or overcome persistent barriers.

Discussion: Barriers may be regulatory, financial, operational, or educational. Identifying and addressing City policies and procedures that negatively impact development is the easiest place to start because the City has control over updating these policies. However, it will also be important to understand more broadly the type of development we want to attract in Dover, where it is likely to occur, and whether we have the infrastructure, market demand, or factors in place that would allow that development to occur.

Measures of Success:

Outputs – Reports, studies, ordinance or document revisions.

Outcomes – Faster permit reviews, shorter construction timelines, fewer requests for relief/assistance related to “frequent flyer” issues, increased commercial/industrial investment.

Goal 2: Provide a variety of resources that will support existing Dover businesses or attract new businesses to Dover.

Objective 2.A: Update existing resources or design new tools that respond to current business challenges.

Objective 2.B: Improve awareness of existing resources provided by the City of Dover and external partners.

Discussion: DBIDA can work with other City boards and departments to optimize existing tools and resources for use by a business audience where applicable and compile information about relevant external programs.

Measures of Success:

Outputs – Ordinance, policy, or program document/website revisions; resource overview documents; website dashboards

Outcomes – Increased program usage for City programs; increase in Dover businesses using external programs, increased success rate for new or relocating businesses

Goal 3: Identify and implement effective strategies for communicating with target audiences.

Objective 3.A: Conduct business outreach to better understand the health of Dover's business community.

Objective 3.B: Engage Dover's business community to communicate key information to a business audience.

Objective 3.C: Promote Dover's business community to a general public audience consisting of Dover residents, visitors, and tourism industry partners.

Discussion: This goal is broad, with each objective having a different target audience. Objective 3.A seeks to gather information from a primary audience of current Dover businesses to better inform DBIDA and Business Development initiatives. Objective 3.B seeks to improve outgoing communication and engagement with an audience of current and potential Dover businesses. Objective 3.C seeks to benefit Dover businesses by promoting Dover and its business community to the general public, either directly or via media outlets and tourism sector partners.

Measures of Success:

Outputs – Business visitations, BR&E documents, presentations, guest posts through Business Development/City publications, press releases, reports

Outcomes – Added capacity for Business Development content generation; DBIDA and Business Development have improved understanding of the current business climate; Dover's business community is more aware of and involved in City initiatives; better awareness of Dover businesses, leading to stronger business performance and lower turnover.

Action Plan

In order to achieve these goals and objectives, DBIDA intends to undertake the actions in the table below. DBIDA prioritized action items by assigning them to one of the following categories:

- Ongoing – This is a recurring action that either has no end date or occurs only as needed
- Short – DBIDA will complete the action in 2025
- Medium – DBIDA will complete the action in 2026-2027
- Long – DBIDA will complete the action in 2028+

Goal 1	Eliminate barriers to starting, operating, and expanding a business in Dover.	
Objective 1.A	Identify City policies or processes that act as barriers and propose or advocate for more business-friendly alternatives.	
Number	Description	Timeline
Action 1.A.1	Review the Developer's Handbook and suggest edits to make the guide easier for businesses to use	2025
Action 1.A.2	Review the City's Construction Guidelines and suggest edits to make the guide easier for businesses to use	2025
Action 1.A.3	Review recent history of variances requested to identify trends and recommend zoning updates to eliminate common barriers	2026-2027
Objective 1.B	Pursue strategic partnerships to remove or overcome persistent barriers.	
Number	Description	Timeline
Action 1.B.1	Assist with identifying and negotiating public/private partnerships that create new opportunities for commercial growth in Dover	Ongoing
Action 1.B.2	Retain a consultant to prepare a market analysis that identifies the most desirable industries for Dover to attract	2025
Action 1.B.3	Analyze opportunities to bring target industries to Dover and infrastructure or other investments that are needed to attract these industries	2026-2027
Goal 2	Provide a variety of resources that will support existing Dover businesses or attract new businesses to Dover.	
Objective 2.A	Update existing resources or design new tools that respond to current business challenges.	
Number	Description	Timeline
Action 2.A.1	Review the City's use of ERZ and 79-E incentives and identify changes to better support future economic growth	2025
Action 2.A.2	Design print or digital materials that communicate Dover's competitive advantages for businesses	2026-2027
Action 2.A.3	Compile and publish demographic or other data that makes Dover attractive to new companies	2026-2027
Action 2.A.4	Secure funding for and assist with the development of a small business incubator	2028+

Action 2.A.5	Identify opportunities to better leverage the Community Development Block Grant program for economic development	2025
Objective 2.B	Improve awareness of existing resources provided by the City of Dover and external partners.	
Number	Description	Timeline
Action 2.B.1	Reach out to businesses located in ERZs to make them aware of the incentive	2025
Action 2.B.2	Design edits to the business pages of the City website to improve navigability and relevance of information	2026-2027
Action 2.B.3	Develop a Comprehensive list of grants and assistance programs that businesses can apply for	Ongoing
Action 2.B.4	Present DBIDA with an overview of the finances at their disposal and the processes required to use them and/or request more	2025
Goal 3	Identify and implement effective strategies for communicating with target audiences.	
Objective 3.A	Conduct business outreach to better understand the health of Dover's business community.	
Number	Description	Timeline
Action 3.A.1	Use Growlab to record business feedback and assign follow-up to OBD staff as needed	Ongoing
Action 3.A.2	Invite businesses to attend DBIDA meetings to address their concerns to the Board	2025
Action 3.A.3	Host or partner to create business engagement or networking opportunities for Dover businesses (e.g. Rotary, GDCC)	2026-2027
Action 3.A.4	Design and release an annual BR&E survey	2026-2027
Action 3.A.5	Engage a consultant to assist with preparation of a Business Retention & Engagement Strategy	2028+
Objective 3.B	Engage Dover's business community to communicate key information to a business audience.	
Number	Description	Timeline
Action 3.B.1	Compile "good news" updates to share with Business Development/external partners for positive news/blog/social media coverage	2025
Action 3.B.2	Develop tutorials, how-to guides, or training opportunities to assist business owners with social media marketing, platforms, Canva, etc.	2026-2027
Action 3.B.3	Celebrate business achievements, especially those tied to previous city support or incentives, through local recognition or award nominations	Ongoing
Action 3.B.4	Write guest posts for City publications like the Dover Download and Down to Business to improve awareness of DBIDA; develop a plan for recurrence and frequency	Ongoing

Action 3.B.5	Assist Business Development staff with generating content for social media content calendar	Ongoing
Objective 3.C	Promote Dover's business community to a general public audience consisting of Dover residents, visitors, and tourism industry partners.	
Number	Description	Timeline
Action 3.C.1	Prepare press releases or media pitches to area publications	Ongoing
Action 3.C.2	DBIDA members engage with other organizations involved in destination marketing initiatives (GDCC, DMS, Communitively, etc.)	Ongoing
Action 3.C.3	Retain a consultant to prepare a destination marketing strategy for Dover	2028+
Action 3.C.4	Members participate in leads or networking groups like NH CIBOR and report back to DBIDA/OBD staff	Ongoing

Appendix A

Pre-Retreat Survey Results



DBIDA Pre-Retreat Survey

Survey Results
INTERIM

12/03/2024

Please read the following- Board Purpose: DBIDA shall provide the leadership and coordination necessary to foster and encourage business and commercial development within the City of Dover, in order to improve the quality of life within, and fiscal health of, the City of Dover. To what extent do you agree that the current purpose of DBIDA accurately reflects the board's mission and priorities?

Overview

Strongly Agree	63% (5)
Agree	38% (3)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Breakdowns

Gender

Responses broken down by the gender of the respondent. Currently, most public data only supports man, woman, and unknown.

Unknown

Strongly Agree	63% (5)
Agree	38% (3)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Age Range

Responses broken down by age of the respondent. Respondents for whom age are unknown are not included in these breakdowns.

Unknown

Strongly Agree	63% (5)
Agree	38% (3)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Rate the following actions based on most important (1) to least important (5) for achieving DBIDA's purpose:

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Cultivate board membership with expertise in a variety of industries to advise staff, the City Council, and other boards/commissions on economic issues	25%	0%	0%	13%	63%
Engage with regulatory processes and policies by advocating on behalf of individual business applicants	13%	13%	25%	0%	50%
Engage with regulatory processes and policies by identifying barriers to economic growth and advocating for more business-friendly alternatives	25%	0%	0%	25%	50%
Formally endorse or approve City activities related to business development (e.g. the sale of commercially-viable City property, participation in development agreements, etc.)	25%	0%	0%	13%	63%
Market Dover as a place to live and conduct business by consulting on messaging, creating print and digital media assets, and advertising in a combination of print, digital, and social media platforms	25%	13%	0%	25%	38%
Research, generate, and refer leads for new or relocating businesses and act as ambassadors to recruit new businesses to Dover	25%	13%	13%	13%	38%
Reach out to existing Dover businesses to understand their needs and barriers, and refer requests for information or assistance to the appropriate City department or resource	13%	13%	0%	38%	38%
Develop new tools or resources for business attraction or assistance and secure funding for their implementation	25%	0%	13%	25%	38%
Administer tools or resources for business attraction or assistance on an ongoing basis	29%	0%	29%	14%	29%

Expand all / Collapse all

1 2 3 4 5

Cultivate board membership with expertise in a variety of industries to advise staff, the City Council, and other boards/commissions on economic issues

25% 13% 63%

How often do you think DBIDA should meet to achieve its purpose?

Monthly as a full board with additional subcommittee or working group meetings	63% (5)
Monthly as a full board only	13% (1)
Every other month as a full board with additional subcommittee or working group meetings (e.g. monthly or in non-meeting months)	13% (1)
Every other month as a full board only	0% (0)
Quarterly as a full board with additional subcommittee or working group meetings (e.g. monthly or in non-meeting months)	13% (1)
Quarterly as a full board only	0% (0)

How much time could you devote to DBIDA activities in a typical month in addition to meeting attendance?

0-1 hours	25% (2)
1-4 hours	63% (5)
5-8 hours	13% (1)
8+ hours	0% (0)

There are eight pillars that make up the City's Master Plan Vision. Please read the pillars below and indicate whether DBIDA has the expertise to contribute to each vision pillar.

Question	Strong Expertise	Some Expertise	Neutral	Little Expertise	No Expertise
We are a welcoming, connected, and engaged community with a high level of civic participation and a transparent, responsible local government.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
We are a City with an emerging urban vibrancy, guided by intentional growth to create connected neighborhoods, attractive streetscapes, and accessible open space, while maintaining what makes Dover distinct.	71%	29%	0%	0%	0%
We have an attractive, thriving downtown, connected to a lively waterfront, that serves as a City center and gathering place, and is known as a destination for visitors, businesses, and community events.	63%	25%	13%	0%	0%
We have affordable and attainable housing and support services that are accessible to, and utilized by, individuals, families, and households of diverse backgrounds and needs.	25%	38%	38%	0%	0%
We are a community committed to supporting, attracting, and expanding business and employment opportunities that foster economic growth and community well-being.	63%	38%	0%	0%	0%
We have a robust transportation system that encourages safe and appealing pedestrian, transit, and other alternative transportation options that connect us to the broader region.	25%	38%	38%	0%	0%
We have outstanding schools, recreation, and cultural activities for all ages, and our community organizations collaborate to provide us a strong foundation and promising future.	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
We are leaders in incorporating innovation to create resilient and environmentally focused infrastructure, energy, and utility systems to responsibly steward our resources and cherished environment.	25%	38%	38%	0%	0%

Expand all / Collapse all

Strong Expertise Some Expertise Neutral Little Expertise No Expertise

Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
DBIDA sets effective goals for itself to reach.	25%	50%	13%	13%	0%
DBIDA has a strong track record of meeting the goals that it sets for itself.	13%	63%	13%	13%	0%
DBIDA has effective measures in place for tracking progress towards its goals.	25%	38%	25%	13%	0%

Expand all / Collapse all

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

DBIDA sets effective goals for itself to reach.

25% 50% 13% 13%

DBIDA has a strong track record of meeting the goals that it sets for itself.

13% 63% 13% 13%

DBIDA has effective measures in place for tracking progress towards its goals.

25% 38% 25% 13%

What are the most important services DBIDA provides to businesses in Dover?

Advocacy, Planning for the future, help to streamline municipal processes

Still new to the board so getting a broader understanding of services.

The support provided to businesses in Dover is invaluable. Additionally, the innovations and advances that being proposed by the City staff are incredible and will greatly benefit Dover businesses. DIBDA needs to continue to support these efforts and be a bridge to the community.

Resources and support to business owners

Networking and positive growth

The ability and know how of the DBIDA members who are also business owners and professionals in the community

Connect businesses, developers, and city planners to align goals.

I think DBIDA's most important services currently are reviewing economic development, zoning, projects and similar matters and providing feedback to the City Council or Planning Board as well as City Staff. This is different from the former primary task of developing city owned real estate and we are feeling our way through this new role.

Are there any services that DBIDA does NOT currently provide to constituent businesses that it should consider offering or focusing on?

Providing a plan for future Industrial Expansion, Helping develop an approach to the housing needs of the city.

Nothing to add at this time.

Not that I can think of at this time.

N/A

Not that I'm aware of

should act as ambassadors for affordable housing initiatives to gain public support

Not really, I think that DBIDA is not well suited to providing direct outreach and I think that our primary function will be advisory.

Thank you for responding to the survey- anything else you'd like to share?

No

N/A

Thank you for taking the time to put this survey together.

It's an interesting time for DBIDA with Enterprise park reaching its conclusion. I think the board is comprised of a valuable and useful set of people who can assist the City in thoughtful development but defining that new role is challenging.

Appendix B

Strategic Planning Retreat Summary Report

Pre-Retreat Survey Discussion

8 members were able to complete the pre-retreat survey prior to the retreat. The results were presented to the board, and used to focus around issues that needed clarification.

The board was presented with the following purpose statement:

DBIDA shall provide the leadership and coordination necessary to foster and encourage business and commercial development within the City of Dover in order to improve the quality of life within, and fiscal health of, the City of Dover.

All eight survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this purpose statement, and no changes were proposed.

The survey question regarding possible actions received some fairly disparate responses, and was discussed in greater detail to clarify the meaning of some items and build consensus around which best fit with the board's vision:

- DBIDA is interested in engaging with regulatory processes, but would prefer to primarily engage at the policy/process level rather than at the scale of individual applications. While DBIDA can be an ambassador for everybody, they would not want to see frequent pitches from developers seeking endorsements for every project.
- DBIDA would like to be more actively and proactively engaged in strategic decisions about business development activities, including sale of commercially-viable City property, participation in development agreements with private developers, etc.
- Members would like to assist with business attraction and retention activities, but prefer to do so at a high level (e.g. by assessing the market for certain business types, or by hosting events or developing systems that can get information from businesses, not by pitching individual businesses to relocate or reaching out to businesses individually for meetings).

When asked about meeting and “homework” preferences, board members overwhelmingly preferred to meet monthly, with five of eight respondents suggesting additional subcommittee or working group meetings on top of regular meetings. Most board members felt they had capacity to devote roughly 1-4 hours in a typical month to DBIDA activities, with two members saying they could only manage an hour or less, and only one member willing to offer more than four hours.

The pre-retreat survey asked members about their expertise as it related to the eight pillars of Dover's master plan vision. Respondents overall rated their expertise very highly across the board, so staff requested clarification on the various pillars regarding how important it was for DBIDA to contribute to each:

- There was unanimous agreement that DBIDA should be contributing to being an engaged community with high civic participation and government transparency, as well as the commitment to supporting, attracting, and expanding business and employment opportunities.
- While not unanimous, there was strong agreement that it was important for DBIDA to contribute to development of an attractive and thriving downtown and waterfront, and to attainable housing and support services.

- There was also some agreement that DBIDA should be engaged in strategies for intentional growth of neighborhoods, streetscapes, and open space in a way that contributes to Dover’s emerging urban vibrancy.
- DBIDA felt it was less important to engage with pillars related to our transportation system, resiliency, and education, recreation, and cultural opportunities.

Survey respondents felt that DBIDA tended to set effective goals and had a strong track record of meeting them, but felt less certain that they currently have effective measures in place for tracking progress towards these goals. The new strategic plan will prioritize a measurable way of tracking implementation progress.

Open-ended responses focused primarily on an advocacy and advisory role for staff, the Planning Board, and City Council related to making policies and procedures more business friendly and for designing tools that can help businesses grow. Comments regarding new services referenced a vision for future industrial expansion and Dover’s housing needs.

Goals

Based on the conversation above, DBIDA reached a general consensus behind three goals that support their overall purpose:

1. Eliminate barriers to starting, operating, and expanding a business in Dover.
 - a. Identify City policies or processes that act as barriers and propose or advocate for more business-friendly alternatives.
 - b. Pursue strategic partnerships that will address these barriers.
2. Provide a variety of resources that will support existing Dover businesses or attract new businesses to Dover.
 - a. Improve awareness of existing resources provided by the City of Dover and external partners.
 - b. Update existing resources or design new tools that respond to current business challenges.
3. Identify and implement effective strategies for communicating with target audiences.
 - a. Conduct business outreach to better understand the health of Dover's business community
 - b. Engage Dover's business community to communicate key information to a business audience
 - c. Promote Dover's business community through effective marketing and/or community engagement techniques

Action Plan

Staff asked DBIDA members to write down example actions that DBIDA could take over the next 3-5 years to implement these goals. The actions were then rated from low to high based on the level of impact they were likely to have on businesses and the amount of effort that was likely to be involved in completing each action. Some similar suggestions were consolidated into a single item as part of this process. The results of this exercise are illustrated in the table below:

		Low Impact	Medium Impact	High Impact
Low Effort	Goal 1 – Barrier Removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine business guides, developer’s handbook et al. Increase engagement w/ City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a manual outlining requirements to start/maintain a business in Dover
	Goal 2 – Toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotional pamphlet about great things Dover has to offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business owner one-stop information portal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly “how to” informational sessions for businesses Resource list of assistance programs (brownfields, training, micro-loans, etc.) Business outreach – how are they and how can we help?
	Goal 3 – PR/Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better leverage Dover Download for info about DBIDA, OBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join and attend a leads/networking group (e.g. Middlesex 3, NH CIBOR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Medium Effort	Goal 1 – Barrier Removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host business engagement sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review variances requested, identify trends, and recommend zoning updates to prevent the need
	Goal 2 – Toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
	Goal 3 – PR/Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a social media strategy Prepare press releases or media pitches to area publications (NH Business Review, Seacoast Online, Yankee Magazine, Seacoast Lately) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
High Effort	Goal 1 – Barrier Removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to expand community event offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain consultants to advise on development, including density, mixed-use zoning, affordable housing, Liberty Mutual Identify opportunities to help developers, property owners, and businesses access capital and/or information that will demonstrate a project’s ROI

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify permitting process improvements to ensure that applicants receive consistent and timely information at all points in the development process • Review current 79-E districts and procedures, and restructure within limits of statute for maximum impact
	Goal 2 – Toolkit	•	• Attract/develop the workforce that businesses need	•
	Goal 3 – PR/Marketing	•	•	•

Next Steps

Staff will compile this information into a draft strategic plan and recommend possible actions to form the basis of an implementation plan. This report will be attached to the final strategic plan as process documentation.